



State of Arizona

Janice K. Brewer
Governor

Office of the Governor
1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, AZ 85007

Main Phone: 602-542-4331
Facsimile: 602-542-7601

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CONTACT: Annie Dockendorff
(602) 542-7029
ADockendorff@az.gov

Governor Brewer Convenes Special Session on Child Safety Reform *State Legislature to Act on Governor's Child Safety Legislation*

PHOENIX – Governor Jan Brewer today signed a Proclamation calling the Arizona Legislature into Special Session on Tuesday, May 27, to pass her critical child safety reform proposal to fundamentally overhaul the state's child safety system.

Addressing the top priority highlighted in Governor Brewer's 2014 State of the State policy agenda, this reform proposal statutorily creates and funds the Department of Child Safety – a new, stand-alone agency whose sole focus is the safety of Arizona's children.

"There can be no higher priority for our state than the safety of its children, who for too long have been failed by a system plagued by a lack of transparency and accountability, a shortage of resources, a massive backlog of cases and a flawed focus," said Governor Brewer. "If we do not act strategically – and soon – to reverse this damage, the crisis will only continue to worsen. It is time that we establish a new Department – with a mission focused on child safety, a culture conducive to fulfilling that mission, and the resources to do the job."

This long-needed reform is the latest of several bold actions Governor Brewer has taken to improve Arizona's beleaguered child safety system. In November, the Office of Child Welfare Investigations (OCWI) – created by Governor Brewer and the State Legislature in 2012 – discovered that thousands of cases of potential child abuse and neglect had gone uninvestigated. Governor Brewer took immediate action, creating the CARE Team to provide independent and transparent oversight of these investigations and also directing the Department of Public Safety to conduct a thorough administrative review of the process that led to this situation. In January, she signed an Executive Order abolishing Child Protective Services and reorganizing a new Division of Child Safety and Family Services – led by Director Charles Flanagan – which reports directly to the governor.

Governor Brewer's fiscal 2015 state budget proposal began to lay the foundation for funding the new Department of Child Safety. The governor has been clear in recent months that additional resources would be needed to ensure the new child safety agency is properly funded from the beginning so it may succeed in its mission.

Now, Governor Brewer is calling upon Arizona state lawmakers to approve this crucial reform measure, crafted over several months by her bi-partisan Child Safety Reform Workgroup which, effective July 1, 2014, establishes the Department of Child Safety as a separate agency – with child safety as the core purpose. Additionally, and equally important, this historic legislation mandates transparency and accountability, and

provides the necessary resources to attack head-on the backlog crisis that has long encumbered the system's ability to be successful in its mission. Once the immediate crisis is corrected, it is incumbent upon future legislatures and governors to properly redirect funds from the backlog toward early intervention and prevention. This bill and the governor's budget plan provide a blueprint to make that happen.

"I thank my Child Safety Reform Workgroup for working diligently and deliberatively on this vital legislation, which is a historic step in creating a child safety system worthy of the vulnerable population it serves," added Governor Brewer. "Now, I am calling on the Arizona Legislature to do its part. We all agree our current system has been broken for decades, and we must not wait any longer to properly repair it. We need to act now – our children cannot wait."

A PowerPoint of the Governor's proposal on the Department of Child Safety is available here: <http://bit.ly/Tyi5Xk>

A summary of the Governor's proposal, budget recommendations & program division between the Department of Child Safety and Department of Economic Security can be found here: <http://bit.ly/RdNSe7>

A copy of the Governor's Proclamation is available here: <http://bit.ly/1kt4SIV>

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